

Members of the Committee on Higher Education and Employment:

My name is Michael LaPorte. I am a resident of the Town of Glastonbury, House district 31 and Senate district 4, a recent graduate of Manchester Community College, and currently a student at the University of Connecticut. I am here today to testify on House Bill 5362.

The purpose of the bill before you today is to increase accountability and transparency in state higher education. It's here because those two critical components to our state's higher education system are missing. Time and time again, the same vicious financial cycle is being followed by the UConn Board of Trustees and the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities' Board of Regents. With that in mind, I'd like to say here, as I said in an editorial published in the Hartford Courant on November 4th, that I'm happy for the steps that ConnSCU president Mark Ojakian has said he'd take towards fixing our state schools, however I believe this bill would be one of the largest steps towards fixing our state systems.

Students and their parents/guardians, as well as any other benefactors, deserve to have easier access to the information pertaining to where their money is going. If, for example, a new program designed to increase cultural diversity at state universities has been implemented and \$300 out of every student's tuition went to it, they deserve to know that. On the same token, if low-level administrators that students never see or hear from get 5% pay raises over two years and a large chunk of their now higher tuition money pays for that, they deserve to know that as well. What they do with that information is completely up to them, but it is vitally important that they at least have, on record, notification that they have received said information.

I'd also like to say that as the author of one of the bill's original drafts, the purpose was intended to focus entirely upon the ConnSCU system and the Board of Regents. The fact that it has been reworked to now focus on all public colleges and universities in Connecticut, thereby including UConn, is an excellent decision because UConn is not entirely innocent in this debacle. I'm not even halfway through my first semester at UConn and I've heard most, if not all, of the exact same complaints regarding tuition, budgets, administrative pay, accountability, transparency, and everything else. Just open up a copy of the Courant and you will find all of the problems going on at UConn, and most of them are mirrored at ConnSCU schools. Administrative pay increases are passed by the ConnSCU Board of Regents and the UConn Board of Trustees when the students either aren't looking or aren't allowed to look. A good friend of mine, Adam Kuegler, who is running to be UConn's next student trustee, has said that the goal of the Board of Trustees should be to "stop going down a route where we are making UConn a less attractive place to support. And she mentioned to [Adam] that while [he] may get an A-plus in political science, [he] doesn't understand how the legislature really works."

Bills like this are what students and the colleges and universities they are enrolled in need. They should have the right to figure out what their money is being spent on. And I hope that you seriously consider this legislation and the positive impact it will have on Connecticut's schools.

Thank you.